

Eduard Cuelenaere\*, Stijn Joye and Gertjan Willems  
**Editorial: Current trends in remaking  
European screen cultures**

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The film remake, whether as a practice or as a concept, has been around since the very beginnings of European cinema (see, e.g., Forrest, 2002). Yet, even today, the practice of remaking films is associated with Hollywood's commercially-driven film industry, not only in popular discourses but equally so in academic literature. Indeed, most research in the field has been restricted to how Hollywood remakes its own films as well as non-Hollywood films, or, vice versa, how non-Hollywood film industries remake Hollywood films. Recently, more and more scholars in the field are making attempts to look beyond the Hollywood film industry, probing into other continents, nations or regions that produce remakes, including Europe. Notwithstanding such promising developments, there is still a clear need for sustained research into the particular context(s) of European screen cultures.

In addition, various scholars (i.e., Corrigan, 2012; Jenkins, 2006; Willis, 2005) have shown how the new millennium signaled a transformed (now digital) media culture, typified by, among other things, more and different viewing screens, an enormous increase in digital distribution, and a growing interest in moving-image content. Constantine Verevis (2017) claims that in such an environment, characterized by a high degree of convergence on many different levels, it becomes more difficult to make clear-cut distinctions between feature films and other (similar) media forms, such as television series or even online video content. Therefore, he concludes, "new millennial remakes [must] be understood as part of a more generalized condition of intermediality" (Verevis, 2017, p. 152). Furthermore, these new millennial remakes, being intrinsically intermedial, are certainly not restricted to Hollywood. For instance, the European film industries have apparently found new ways of ringing up their box offices: namely by remaking national or local hits in other European markets. Verevis (2017) remarks

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how investments in European remake rights are actually quite similar to how television formats are being traded internationally – and within Europe. Hence, aside from the fact that remake studies should not be limited to the borders of Hollywood, they should also not be restricted to the medium of film.

Looking at the European context, one could argue that the discursive nature of European cinema (or more broadly, the European screen culture), that is, its contingent and heavily fragmented character, both culturally and linguistically, reflects the hybrid status of the remake. Indeed, one of the defining elements of the remake is its hybridity, whether disguised by its producers or not, making it an intertext by its very nature. This means that remakes are, generally, the result of a combination of two or more texts that are embedded in often different (European) socio-cultural, political, and industrial contexts. Eduard Cuelenaere, Stijn Joye, and Gertjan Willems argue in this issue that because “source films and remakes often have a more or less identical narrative and dialogic structure, the underlying, latent and ideologically informed meanings become more tangible when juxtaposing their different cinematic manifestations”. Therefore, the focus of this special issue departs from the idea of the film remake as a kind of prism which can be used to examine a variety of aesthetic, cultural, economic and social questions. To accomplish this, various methods and methodologies are used throughout the special issue, ranging from textual analysis to in-depth interviews with media professionals.

By combining the need for more research into the European context with the argument that new millennial remakes are intermedial in their very essence, this special issue also broadens its scope beyond remakes of films by including remakes of, for example, television series, and asks the question of how these come into being in Europe. As such, the collection of original contributions presented here aims to take a new step in the field of film and remake studies by more systematically looking into the specific contexts of European screen cultures, and into how practices of remaking take shape within, between, but also outside those contexts. Accordingly, it wishes to further extend the field of remake studies beyond Hollywood, without ignoring the latter’s consistent, direct or indirect, presence and relevance. Indeed, even though this special issue is ‘limited’ to the European context, it is clear that, in reality, Hollywood is never far away. Think, for example, of the article by Miguel Fernández-Rodríguez Labayen and Ana Martín Morán, which zooms in on the current ascent of remake rights representatives in and beyond Europe, and the consequent production of local-language remakes of comedies. Researching this under-scrutinized segment in the production process of remakes shows that many of the companies (ranging from small to big ones) that mediate remake rights and produce remakes outside Hollywood are actually run by, owned by, or at least closely connected to, the Hollywood

film industry. Moreover, as is illustrated in the article of Cuelenaere, Joye and Willems, even in very small local European contexts, such as the Low Countries, all of the film remakes produced clearly “draw from well-known and established Hollywood industrial practices and creative tropes”.

Whereas the abovementioned articles mainly look at how companies outside the Hollywood industry deal with remakes, Thomas Leitch’s contribution looks at the opposite, that is, at what Hollywood does when it remakes artefacts which are deemed (by European audiences) to have a particularly close link with European subjects and themes. Reviewing five different theories and concepts – starting with “Hollywoodizing”, continuing with “Americanizing”, “Europeanizing”, and “appropriating”, and finishing off with “reframing” – Leitch elaborates on their specific limitations and problems. Thereafter, he argues that many of the problems concepts have are linked with the more abstract issue of the impossible goal of targeting what he calls “the real thing”: that is, the belief that American remakes of European films attempt to return to “the real European nations”, that is, Germany, France, Spain, Italy, or even Europe as a whole. More specifically, he asserts, audiences think that these American remakes are “attempts to present some known and knowable object [...] that has already been presented by those earlier films, whose representations of those places, rather than the places themselves, are seen as *the real thing*”. Pointing to the problems of the aforementioned concepts – which often assume the existence and attainment of “the real thing” – Leitch proposes “scripting” as a better term. Besides acknowledging that remakes are continuously in the process of becoming, thinking of remaking as scripting offers many other advantages, since scripts are “multiple, competing, and non-exclusive”.

In her article titled “*Babylon Berlin*: Pastiche Weimar cinema”, Sara Hall further theorizes the concept of remakes by looking at how the concept of pastiche might be helpful in further grasping the mechanisms of remaking – in this case, remaking an (imagined) historical cinematic period. First, she reminds us of the useful difference between the noun ‘remake’, being a cinematic category, and the practice of ‘remaking’, which covers other media and cultural domains – which is in line with Verevis’ abovementioned claim. In a next step, building on Richard Dyer’s model of pastiche, she argues that the cultural work of pastiche that is performed in the German television series *Babylon Berlin*, activating cinephilic recall and establishing an intermedial conversation between analog and digital forms, fully justifies its inclusion in the discussion of contemporary European remakes. More specifically, after a textual, paratextual, and contextual analysis of the series, Hall argues that *Babylon Berlin* remakes (parts of) Weimar cinema, bridging critics with the past through its representation of the imbrication between “cinema history, precarious democracy, and individual emotions”,

affectively engendering “a historically oriented conversation about the fragility of modern democracy in the Brexit/Trump era”.

Staying within the context of Germany, Kathleen Loock critically assesses the 2016 television production *Winnetou: Der Mythos lebt* (*Winnetou: The myth lives on*), which is a remake of the West German *Winnetou* films from the 1960s. Loock argues that the remake reconfigures German fantasies or imaginations of so-called *Indianer* (Native Americans) and the Old or Wild West in today’s era of post-reunification. Building on a cultural studies approach, she establishes an impressive new theoretical framework, enriching the work on remakes with the idea of generationing, and the concept of cultural memory. Loock shows how the remake by commercial broadcaster RTL capitalizes on the familiarity of the (mostly but not solely West German) pop-cultural past of *Winnetou*, while also coming to terms with the (East German) *Indianerfilme* history and engaging with the broader history of German constructions of *Indianer*. After a close textual and contextual analysis, Loock argues that “*Winnetou: Der Mythos lebt* combines East and West German fantasies of *Indianer* and the Wild West through narrative and aesthetic strategies that simultaneously highlight the ‘Germanness’ of the myth more than any of the earlier renditions”. Hence, even though the 2016 remake succeeds in being an inclusive cultural text that helps Germans to imagine Germany as one whole, it does so through cultural appropriation (see also Leitch in this issue) of *Indianer*, hampering Native Americans to dismantle such “Indian” constructs.

Finally, the contributions by Cuelenaere, Joye and Willems, on the one hand, and Labayen and Morán, on the other, focus on so-called local-language remakes. These can generally be placed under Loock’s helpful category of *synchronic remaking*, that is, remakes that are produced almost simultaneously in different places – which contrasts with *diachronic remaking*, whereby the time between the source film and its remake(s) is longer. Whereas Labayen and Morán’s article focuses on the importance of inquiring into the industrial side of these remakes – analyzing the work of remake rights representatives and their catalogs – by drawing mainly on in-depth interviews, Cuelenaere, Joye and Willems opt for a systematic textual analysis of nine film remakes together with their nine source texts. The latter advance a new model that enabled them to more systematically analyze remakes by looking at the formal, textual, and cultural codes of these films. While they found that Dutch-Flemish remakes were almost all in need of localization – reflecting perceptions of cultural differences and stereotypes instead of “the real thing” – their article also proves that localization is only part of the broader remake process. The authors demonstrate how filmmakers are highly aware of the negative connotation of the remake, but simultaneously add self-reflexive references to the remake process in their films. In their article,

Labayen and Morán coin the term “manufacturing proximity”, referring to the process that “presents remakes as originals for national audiences and aims at co-opting local markets through the alliance of remake rights and PI distributors with national production companies”, which also proves to be illuminating for the case of Cuelenaere, Joye and Willems. Furthermore, Labayen and Morán show how the television format model that is being used globally now is actually quite similar to the production model of many of the remakes being released within and beyond Europe’s film industry – which supports Verevis’ hypothesis mentioned earlier. Lastly, they emphasize the importance of intermediaries – such as remake rights agents – and show how these actors greatly shape the industrial and cultural dynamics of contemporary (European) remakes.

To conclude, this special issue aims to answer a number of the most prevailing questions while simultaneously raising others by providing the reader with a selection of some of the most recent and innovative scholarship in the emerging field of transnational remakes and seriality studies. Bringing together a diversity of research approaches and insights around the central question of remakes in the context of European screen cultures, we hope this special issue will spur future research by exploring new directions and challenging old ideas.

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